

people, one may say with truth, fitly chosen of God as the training place of those men — Master and disciples — who were to move the world; the proper soil in which first to plant the seeds of that truth which was destined, ere long, to be spoken by eloquent lips in the pulpits of Cesarea, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome.

ARTICLE III.

BAPTISM OF INFANTS, AND THEIR CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP.¹

BY REV. G. F. WRIGHT, ANDOVER, MASS.

THERE are some who regard the subject of this Article as puerile, and pertaining to the mere externals of religion — a question which is scarce worthy the attention of masculine intellect at any time, least of all after it has been worn so threadbare as this is supposed to have been. If any such read as far as this, we trust they will read two or three sentences more. For we would remind them that it is the part neither of humility nor of wisdom to treat as unworthy of our notice any question which has stirred the Christian world so profoundly as this has done. For oftentimes the importance of a subject does not appear on the surface, but in its connections with truths that are underneath it, and which it represents.

It will be found, on close inspection, that the question of baptism connects itself with one's whole system of divinity. Infant baptism, as we regard it, is a sacrament which has objective significance, and into which is compressed one half the New Testament theology. Theology is taught by it.

¹ It is well to caution the reader that the design of this Article is logical and philosophical rather than historical or exegetical. In the succeeding Number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, we will present a comparative survey of the modern views that have prevailed with respect to the connection existing between Baptism and Regeneration. For the early history of the rite, and its exegetical foundation, the reader must be referred to the standard treatises on the subject.

The faith of the church is expressed in it. The favor of God is pledged in connection with it. It is the symbolic language in which the faith of the church may rise to its highest degree of strength. That faith, where it is faith, and not superstition, places the baptized person in such relations to God's plan of operations, that God can wisely, and will, according to his promise, do more to secure his salvation than he otherwise could.

In the economy of grace, prayer for the salvation of men puts them in the way of receiving more abundant ministrations of the Spirit. Infant baptism is, on the part of parent and church, a confession, a prayer, a pledge, and a hope, embodied in one sacrament. It is a confession of the universal reign of sin, except where grace abounds, a prayer for the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, a pledge of faithfulness in Christian nurture, and a monument of the hope that the prayer will be answered, and that, through the divine blessing, the nurture will accomplish its designed results. As being the most objective and public expression of this faith that can be made on the part of the parent and the church, God, on his part binds himself in this act more than in any other, to fulfil his promise, and bestow peculiar blessings upon the children thus consecrated to him. Not that we can presume upon the conversion of all on the mere fact of their having been baptized. But we can safely presume that where infant baptism is properly defined and held up before the church, and is intelligently practised, children will have, in the first place, on the whole, better Christian nurture, as a result of the influence of this ordinance on the parents and the church; and, in the next place, will, in answer to the baptismal prayer and the prayers that are incited by the rite, have more of the gracious influences of the Spirit. So that where superstition has not taken the place of intelligent faith in the maintenance of the rite, we may address baptized children, as probably resisting greater light than others so long as they remain in their sins.

Our position is not that the baptism of an infant, when

unaccompanied with faith or pledge of faithfulness on the part of those solemnizing the rite, avails anything for the infant. It certainly does not; for that is baptism with baptism left out. Nor do we say that it is impossible to connect with the rite such errors of doctrine as to make it a hinderance, rather than a help, to the progress of the gospel. Nor do we confine the influence of the baptism to the person baptized. But it is, we maintain, naturally adapted to secure a general interest in the religious culture of the young. Its right use makes the conversion of all the children in a community more probable, whether baptized or not, though not in equal degree.

It is to be confessed, however, that infant baptism is a sacrament that has been greatly abused. There is, in many quarters, a dangerous tendency to ascribe a magical effect to the rite. It is to be hoped that the Baptists will not cease their protest against this tendency, till it shall have entirely disappeared. In their attempts to give an intelligible significance to the sacrament of baptism we bid them a hearty God-speed.

At the same time, we cherish the hope that some of us can give, and have given them valuable assistance, and still have maintained the propriety and importance of applying the rite to infants. We do not yet despair of harmonizing all parties on what may be called for convenience the New England view of infant baptism. But in speaking of our view as the "New England view," we do not mean to imply that it has not prevailed in other places, or that it originated here, but only that here it has had its typical development, and has had freer scope for its exercise than anywhere else.¹ Nor do

¹ See the testimony of Dr. Hodge below (p. 286). What we call here for brevity and convenience the "New England view," accords in the main with that prevailing among the Independents of England and the Presbyterians, especially the New School branch, of this country. The Methodists accord with it also, so far as the connection of the baptism of a child, and his church-membership is concerned, though the Arminian tendencies would lead them to a different statement of reasons for the baptism of a child.—See Dr. Whedon, in *Methodist Quarterly Review* for January, 1873, pp. 132-134.

we wish to imply that it is not the scriptural view. For we are confident that the New England filter has not stopped anything but the figments of false philosophy that had attached themselves to the conception of infant baptism.

We would premise, still further, that we have no new revelation on the subject, and cannot be expected, at this late day in the discussion, to shed any new light but such as shall come from a wider collation of views, and a more explicit statement of the doctrine that underlies the practice of our churches upon the subject than is to be found in ordinary treatises.

I. STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

The view of infant baptism which we hold, and here defend, is as follows: (*a*) Infant baptism is significant of the universal need of regeneration; and (*b*) of the hope, resting on the covenant of God, that children dedicated to the Lord, nurtured in faithful Christian families, and watched over by a faithful church, will be regenerated; but (*c*) it leads to a confusion of thought and a perversion of the rite to call baptized children "church members," until they give some positive signs of regeneration, and make public profession of Christ.

It will be in order here, as preliminary to the main discussion, to consider the views that have prevailed regarding the significance of baptism in general. It will be found that up to a certain point all parties agree. All unite in saying that baptism symbolizes man's need of regeneration. Baptism embodies in permanent and impressive symbol the teaching of the Saviour, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Beyond this, Christians are divided into three classes, according as they hold that baptism should signify (*a*) that regeneration takes place at the instant of baptism, (*b*) that it probably has taken place previous to baptism, (*c*) that parents, church, and God are brought into such covenant relations in the intelligent solemnization of the rite of infant baptism that the person baptized probably will be regenerated.

The Greek church,¹ the Roman Catholic,² the Lutheran,³ and the High Church Episcopalian⁴ hold that in the case of infants, regeneration is contemporaneous with the act of baptism. Yet it must be confessed that their explanations, if they were only understood, often remove much of the practical difference between their views and those here defended. By reducing the word "regeneration" to its minimum of significance, they would often make the doctrine of baptismal regeneration comparatively harmless, were it not that the idea of regeneration in the minds of common people does not, and ought not to admit of much reduction. Again, by holding that we can fall from grace, those of Arminian tendencies can, after the analogy of a counter-irritant in medicine, in some measure counteract the one error by introducing another. The doctrine is thus sometimes rendered almost entirely harmless, by speaking of baptismal regeneration as a *germ*, dependent for its power of development on future conditions and circumstances which are contingent. In this case, the harmlessness comes from almost wholly emptying the words of their meaning. If they would only stay empty, as they fall on the ear of the ordinary hearer, the harm would be negative, rather than positive. But there is the difficulty.

In addition to those mentioned above as holding to baptismal regeneration, we should mention also the denomination called Campbellites⁵ who are understood to maintain, though from a point of view quite different from that of the others enumerated, that baptism has something more than the "necessity of a precept" with regard to regeneration. In their view, submission to the ordinance of baptism is that crowning act of faith or obedience which is in ordinary cases an indispensable prerequisite to the new birth. And so they make regeneration synchronize with baptism.

But, as it is not in the province of this Article to enter into an extended discussion of the errors of the ritualistic view of baptism, we will pass on to the ordinary views of Baptists

¹ See in the next Number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, p. 548 sq.

² *Ibid.* p. 550.

³ *Ibid.* p. 551 sq.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 554 sq.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 575.

upon the relation of baptism to regeneration. Our statements now have reference solely to the views of Baptists regarding the proper *subjects* of baptism; we have now nothing to do with the *mode* of baptism. The central idea of Baptists upon this subject is that persons must give in their life and profession visible signs of having been regenerated, before they are proper subjects of baptism, and that baptism initiates them into the visible church.¹ Baptists do not hold that the applicant for baptism must give infallible signs of regeneration. But they take that reasonable view of church-membership which we defend in this Article, viz., that the church is to require as the condition of membership a *reasonable amount of positive evidence* that regeneration has taken place, and should not rest merely with the negative evidence which enables us barely to hope that regeneration may possibly have taken place. The preparation of heart which Baptists require for baptism is the same with that which we require for church-membership. Just here is where we separate. We hold that baptism may safely be made to mean more, and ought and was designed to mean more, than it can mean when used only as an initiatory rite of admission to the visible church. We contend that by applying baptism to infants we make the rite more significant and valuable than it can be while confining it to adults, and that we may without great difficulty guard it against the perversions of ritualism, and can thereby secure greater conformity to the analogies of the divine government and the exigencies of human experience. Our view is that baptism, as applied to infants, is to be significant not of what takes place at the instant of the performance of the rite, nor of what has probably taken place at some previous time, but that it is significant of a new birth that needs to take place, and which we have reasonable grounds of hoping will take place, and also of the forces requisite and in operation to secure its occurrence. This doctrine of baptism carries a much fuller meaning than the others, and avoids the

¹ See "A Hand-Book on Christian Baptism" (pp. 8-10), by R. Ingham. London, 1865.

abuses that are in danger of growing up under either of them, and is the view, we are confident, which will more and more prevail as close attention is given to the subject.

We will now more fully state and defend this proposition, and consider :

II. WHEREIN BAPTISTS AGREE WITH US.

We must bear in mind that baptism is a symbol, and, aside from its limited natural significance, it expresses only what is put into it. The natural import of the rite has no bearing on the question whether regeneration has taken place, does now take place, or ought and is likely to take place. One part of the general argument of immersionists, strangely enough, is an argument in favor of infant baptism, for they attempt, by insisting on immersion, to get more meaning into the symbol. They say that if immersion is not practised we are likely to lose the full idea of being buried with Christ in baptism. As immersionists would keep the symbol full of meaning by adherence to a particular *mode of baptism*, so we can urge with force that we would keep the rite full of meaning by applying it to *particular subjects*, viz., children. Pedo-baptists contend that the practice of infant baptism has a natural tendency to keep alive correct views of, and true faith in, God's covenant promise regarding children. Both immersionists and pedo-baptists are aiming, though in different directions, to prevent the symbol of baptism from being robbed of what they suppose to be its natural and distinct significance.

Another thing which weakens the force of the opposition of immersionists to our view of infant baptism is the fact that they, unless it be the portion of them that hold to baptismal regeneration, hold with us, confessedly, that baptism belongs not to the essence of Christianity, but to its symbolism. With the exception made, Baptists do not consider immersion essential to salvation ; but, in their view, it belongs to the administrative machinery by which true views of the gospel are propagated. It has the necessity of

precept only. Baptism is, with them, as with us, a form through which expression is given to gospel truth. Strenuous as they are for their form of baptism, they are still more strenuous in their defence of the true doctrine of justification on condition of the exercise of individual faith. On their own grounds regeneration precedes baptism. This admission remands baptism to a place of secondary importance, i.e., it compels the acknowledgement that baptism belongs to the symbolical language which holds the treasure of the gospel. It is of the letter, and not of the spirit of the gospel. This appears in their position with regard to close communion. The intelligent and consistent defence of close communion does not proceed on the supposition that immersed persons are the only regenerate believers.¹ But they base their refusal to invite unimmersed persons to the Lord's table on the same grounds of order and expediency on which other denominations refuse to invite unbaptized persons to commune with them. The ground of exclusion, in both cases, is, that it is necessary for the general interests of the truth that certain modes of expressing the truth be preserved and emphasized.

We come now to the question: What truths are they that we need to have preserved and emphasized in the rite of baptism?

Immersionists say, among other things, that the completeness of our death to sin, and of our renunciation of the works of self-righteousness is to be symbolized by immersion. Very well; we have no occasion to dispute this point now; we only allege that this can be symbolized as well by infant immersion, after the manner of the Greek church, as by the immersion of adults. The baptism of adult converts can only emphasize the general need of regeneration, plus the fact that this particular person gives reasonable ground for hope that he has been regenerated. Infant baptism can emphasize as well as, and we believe a little better than, adult baptism, the general fact that man needs regeneration, and,

¹ See an Article on "Close Communion," by Rev. Alvah Hovey, D.D., Professor in Newton (Baptist) Theological Seminary. Bib. Sac., Vol. xix. p. 133 sq.

at the same time give prominence to other facts more in need of emphasis than that a particular person has been regenerated, and which cannot otherwise be sufficiently emphasized.

III. WHAT PEDO-BAPTISTS ARE AFRAID OF LOSING.

We are afraid of losing a lively sense of these additional facts following, which are symbolized in infant baptism: (1) That God's promises give ground of expectation that a faithful use of the means of the gospel will probably result in the conversion of our children: (2) that childhood presents the golden opportunity for the faithful use of the means of regeneration; that faithfulness to our children will tell as nowhere else in securing the fruits of grace; and that unfaithfulness there is fraught with results the most serious conceivable. These facts regarding the position and condition of children deserve a monument, we contend, that shall keep them in everlasting remembrance. It is true, they may be remembered without a monument; but a monument is a natural help to the memory that we cannot safely dispense with in such a case, especially when one has been provided, in infant baptism, so suitable for the purpose, and which, though different in form, is genealogically descended from the one that was set up when God first revealed to Abraham his plan of operating through the family. The rite of infant baptism stands as a monument to warn us that the crisis through which a human being passes while under the influences of home training, is momentous in the extreme. It stands, too, as a lighthouse to assure us that we are not in unknown seas, but that the help even of God is at hand. No other facts stand more in need of being impressed on our minds than these. For nothing else does the condition of the church call more loudly than for parents who have a vivid sense of the perils of the opening years of human existence, and who, at the same time, both know where their hope lies and, like Abraham of old, count everything else of small importance compared with the moral and religious impressions which they may bequeath to their posterity. If there is not

needed a light-house at this point in the divine plan for the salvation of men, it is difficult to see where it would be needed. Infant baptism, rightly used, is such a light-house to warn us of danger, to stimulate us with hope, and to guide us into a secure haven. Because some have hung in that light-house the wrong-colored light, it need not prevent us from seeing in it the true light that lighteth every one that cometh into the world. Of one thing we are confident, that it stands in the place where it is needed.

The point at issue between us and the Baptists may be stated symbolically, thus: Let A = the doctrine of regeneration. Let B = the expression of the accomplished fact of regeneration, in adult baptism. Let C = an acknowledgment of those agencies, both human and divine, natural and gracious, that co-operate to make it probable that the children of faithful Christian parents will be regenerated. The problem is, which is the greater, B or C, for A is constant. Which is it the more important to have in baptism, A+B or A+C? Pedo-baptists contend that B is the smaller quantity, and can be more easily supplied by other means; and, inasmuch as we cannot keep both B and C in the same ordinance, they choose to retain C, and supply B in some other way.

The child is the typical object of influence. Whatever may be done for others in the way of conferring spiritual blessings upon them can be done with a greater degree of certainty and in fuller measure for the child. The whole dependence of childhood and the whole constitution of the family indicate this fact, so far as natural forces are concerned. It is a very impressive fact that in infant baptism we acknowledge that natural influences are not enough, but that we need, and have ground to hope for, the divine aid in making these influences effectual for salvation.

Properly to set forth and emphasize this ground of hope in the promises of God is more vital to the interests of the church, we contend, than to emphasize unduly the fact symbolized by adult baptism. And there is nothing absurd in this hope which is symbolized in infant baptism. Even im-

mersionists cherish it. They hope that by prayer and faithful instruction they shall render it probable that their children will be converted. They hope that by their faith their children will be put in more favorable circumstances with reference to the Spirit's influences than they would be in were it not for the parents' faith. Now, there is nothing absurd in the supposition that the baptism of an infant, as expressive of the collective faith of those administering the rite, may, in the economy of God's kingdom place the subject in more favorable conditions than he would otherwise be in. God may respond to the faith that is expressed through a symbol as well as to that which is expressed in words. And we can easily conceive that this faith for the conversion of children may rise to a higher point of assurance through the concrete expression of it in infant baptism, than can be attained in any other way. Infant baptism is more objective in its form, and so in the economy of salvation may be more important. For infant baptism, when viewed with unprejudiced eyes, carries a profounder confession of man's need of regeneration than adult baptism. When an adult is baptized, our attention is directed to the condition of a single individual of the race, who has been tried and has fallen under the curse of the law. When an infant is baptized, we are brought face to face with the general fact of depravity. This individual, though not yet having committed actual sin, still has a nature such that we are sure he will sin and will need regeneration. Here, certainly, is a profounder and fuller expression of the orthodox belief in depravity than is made in adult baptism. It is more significant to baptize the spring from which the river flows than to baptize the stream at any point in its course below; for the impurities of the river may be accidental and occasional, which have flowed in on surface tributaries, but the impurities of the spring have come out of the ground, and are original and universal.

No stronger testimony can be borne to one's own need of regeneration than to testify, as the parent and the church do in the rite of infant baptism, that their children, who may

not yet have sinned, will certainly sin, and need regeneration. With this sense of our need of divine grace, the soul turns with inexpressible longings to the covenants which God has made with his people. Promises have been made to his people and to their children. These promises were symbolized to the church in the old dispensation in a religious rite. Great pains have been taken in numerous ways to emphasize the fact of God's readiness to help us in our effort to save our children. Furthermore, as prayer in some degree incites us to a right use of the other means necessary for the accomplishment of the ends desired, so the intelligent practice of an objective rite like infant baptism in still greater degree may incite to the use of the right means at the best time and place for securing the end at which it aims, viz., the regeneration of the soul. Its monumental position at the opening of human responsibility we believe to be of the greatest importance. The faith exercised through it in that position, and the duties encouraged by it in connection with that period of moral receptivity, are tangible advantages, which it would seem that even those who challenge us to show what good it does to baptize an infant ought to appreciate.¹

¹ See Rev. W. H. H. Marsh's *Interrogations in the Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xxix. p. 696. To his first question, "Do all, do a majority, of these baptized children become Christians?" we reply: If in these he includes Greeks, Roman Catholics, and high Lutherans, in one body with Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, we should not prejudice our cause to answer with him, No. But if the question be confined to those children who are baptized in what we regard the right faith, we think we could answer that a majority of them do become manifestly regenerate. When, however, we attempt to use statistics, it must be confessed, on both sides, that they are not, except in very general limits, a reliable indication of the causes that have produced the facts which they tabulate. In securing a given number of conversions in a given period of time, there are so many causes in operation that it is well nigh impossible to trace out the influence of one like infant baptism in all its ramifications. Even if Baptists had the statistics to show that their children as a class were as likely to be converted as those of Pedo-baptists, it would not prove their point; for Baptists have thus far been under the peculiar stimulus to activity that arises from their position as separatists. They are, perhaps, incited to good works by their challenge to the rest of Christendom. Thus the general practice of infant baptism in surrounding denominations might have more influence in accounting for their facts than they suppose; while, if all should be induced to neglect

Now, if it be said that opponents of infant baptism keep hold of all these promises of the covenant, we are ready to grant

or oppose infant baptism, the general change in regard to the operation of grace in connection with family piety might be disastrous. It would be, however, something for us to show, in answer to the Baptists, that the prospects of our children were not damaged by infant baptism; for in their view the application of the rite to children is such a perversion of it, that its influences must be likely to poison the whole body into which it is introduced. So that, if the Baptists concede that regeneration is as much a characteristic of our Congregational church-membership as of their own; and, if they concede that we secure the regeneration of as large a proportion of our children as they, it is as much in place for us to ask them to show wherein the practice of infant baptism has done us harm, as for them to ask us wherein it has helped us. We do not place much confidence in any statistics that have been gathered; but that must not hinder us from presenting what we have, and at the same time indicating what statistics might throw some light on the subject. It would aid us to know: (1) How large a proportion of the children in the country are baptized. (2) How large a proportion of these are under the care of evangelical churches. (3) How large a proportion of unbaptized children have the benefits of early home religious training. (4) What proportion of persons admitted to evangelical churches were baptized in infancy. (5) What proportion of those admitted to Baptist churches were brought up in Christian families. (6) What proportion of the accessions to all evangelical churches had the advantages of Christian home education. When accurate statistics are gathered for a considerable period on all these points, the figures will be manageable. As it is, there are so many unknown quantities present that we must proceed with caution when we attempt to reason inductively from them. Pædo-baptists take the position of true conservatism. We will follow our reasoning from the nature of the case as found in the constitution of the family and the scripture history and promises and commands, until some one shows clearly, by counter arguments or facts, that our long-established position is untenable. Arguments and facts led us, long ago, to abandon the position that mere baptism was so sufficient a guaranty of regeneration that it would be safe to throw upon the church the burden of proving that an applicant for admission to the church, who had been baptized in infancy, had not been regenerated. From that other position, in which Congregationalists have been entrenched for now well nigh three hundred years, and to which the majority of Methodists and Presbyterians in this country have come, they are not yet dislodged, and, if we mistake not, are likely to see, if they do not now see, that they should not be dislodged. With the protest against its being anything but tentative, we present the following statistics. See *Congregational Quarterly*, Vol. xv. p. 180:

From 1859 to 1873, fourteen years, there were 174,607 additions to the Congregational churches in this country by profession. Of these, 77,803 were baptized at the time of their admission, leaving 96,804 who had been baptized in their infancy. When, now, we take into account the fact that a large minority of our members, take the country through, do not practise infant baptism, as the periodical wail in our various State Conferences over the neglect of the

it; but we say that they hold on to them with needless difficulty, i.e., they are trying to hold on to them by main strength, when there is a natural ally in the rite of infant baptism.

ordinance shows, and when we take into account the large number of outsiders whose children we are making such strenuous endeavors to interest and convert in our Sabbath-schools and by revival efforts, it is a significant fact that four sevenths of the additions to our churches by profession were of those who had been baptized in infancy.

Still more striking are the statistics for the year 1859, when the fruits of the remarkable revivals of the previous year were gathered in. There were then 25,202 additions by profession, of whom 14,471 had been baptized in infancy. That is, in a year of revivals, when, if ever, those outside of Christian families would be moved, three fifths of the converts had been baptized in infancy, besides the large number who had been trained under the general influences of churches that observe this rite, and must have formed no inconsiderable portion of the remainder.

For earlier, less general, but in many respects more specific, attempts at ascertaining the extent to which infant baptism in New England churches increased the probability of conversion, see the next Number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* (p. 570); also, *Doctrinal Tract*, No. 35, on *Infant Baptism*. — American Doctrinal Tract Society; also, "Infant Baptism Illustrated." — Massachusetts Sunday-School Society, 1843 [By Asa Bullard, D.D.], in which a large number of exceedingly interesting and impressive facts are gleaned, tending to show that conversions, in Congregational parishes, among those baptized when children are very far in excess of their relative number. For example, from the reports to the Massachusetts Sunday-School Society, in 1837, it appears there were four hundred and fourteen conversions in forty-seven schools; two hundred and seventy-two of these were baptized in infancy. The next year, out of eight hundred and eleven conversions, in sixty-four schools, four hundred and ninety-three were baptized in infancy. In 1840, three fourths of the converts had been baptized in infancy. In 1841, of eight hundred and eighty-two converts in eighty-seven schools reporting, five hundred and sixty were baptized in infancy. Of eighty-seven pious students connected with Amherst College, Massachusetts, in 1841, sixty-eight had pious parents, and sixty were baptized in infancy. Of one hundred and ten students in Andover Theological Seminary, 1841, ninety-four had pious mothers, and eighty-four were baptized in infancy (p. 24).

The point that we believe to be incontrovertible is, that home Christian nurture increases vastly the probabilities of future regeneration. This fact points to the family as pre-eminently God's institution for the perpetuation of religious faith. Whatever may be our philosophy about it, this no one can deny. What we affirm is, that it is in accordance with all analogy that God should have in his church a monument reminding us of it. Such we believe infant baptism is. We fear, if we give it up, we shall gradually lose sight of the momentous truths which it symbolizes. We may go safely so far as to say that we by these statistics, rebut the objection of the Baptists that infant baptism deadens our solicitude for the conversion of children, and so diminishes its probability.

They are trying to do by hand what God has provided machinery to do. This argument, as we have said, is the same as that with which they ply us in regard to the neglect of immersion. For they admit that we may keep the true idea of being buried with Christ in baptism, even though we baptize by sprinkling; but they aver we do so with unnecessary and perilous difficulty. We are aware that just here we shall be met with the objection that infant baptism naturally leads to the error of baptismal regeneration, and so, though good machinery, is too dangerous to use.

We will show therefore in the next place :

IV. HOW WE KEEP WHAT THE BAPTISTS FEAR WE ARE GOING TO LOSE.

It will be seen that we guard against the evil of an unregenerate church-membership; (a) by our definition of baptism, viz., the application of water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as symbolical of the universal need of regeneration, plus the hope that through the faithful use of means the promise of God will secure this regeneration; (b) by the practice of our churches of refusing to consider baptized children members of the church in full, till they have given credible evidence of regeneration. Then their public identification with a body that believes in and practises the rite of baptism becomes a confession of all that baptism signifies. In some churches, it has been the commendable practice of publicly asking the candidate, on his admission to the church, if he now accepts the baptism by which he was consecrated to the Lord as his own act.¹ Such a practice would guard still further against the danger here indicated, and would impress the significance and importance of the rite. But still that only states explicitly what is always in our churches implicitly contained in the act.²

On the other hand, some will ask: "What advantage,

¹ See Confession of Faith in use in the church at Old Cambridge, Mass.

² For a detailed statement of the views of New England Congregationalists on the significance of infant baptism, both in regard to regeneration and church-membership, see next Number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, p. 558-576.

then, hath the Jew; or, what profit is there of circumcision," if the child is not made thereby absolutely a member of the church? We answer: "Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." It is something to be constantly reminded of the promises of God in connection with our confession of the curse of the fall. And, furthermore, the very indefiniteness of the promise, as the view of infant baptism here defended presents it, is calculated to guard all parties concerned against a fatalistic confidence in baptism as a magical rite, or, as the Catholics would say, an *opus operatum*, which does not properly respect the free-agency of man. Here there is, again, a very close analogy to the generally received doctrine concerning the effects of prayer, or the presentation of the word, in the work of securing the salvation of men. The use of these means for the conversion of men does not render their conversion certain, but it does render it more probable.

As we have said, the child, both in his natural condition and in his relation to God's covenant, is the most hopeful object for whom we can exercise faith. If properly exercised by parents and churches for their children, there is a nearer approach to a certainty of securing conversion than in any other case. Perhaps we may say, if the faith and nurture are perfect, conversion is certain. While it cannot be unimportant that the church is reminded of the golden opportunity by such a rite as that of infant baptism, yet it is important that all parties concerned be warned that baptism is not a magical operation, but a rational exercise of faith, which regards the free-will of all parties concerned.¹

Here it is that we take issue with those who would call

¹ It will be seen, on a careful study of the subject, that this idea of uncertainty enters with a good degree of prominence into both the Calvinistic and the Arminian view of baptism. As Calvinists hold that those who are elected will certainly be saved, but warn every one of the uncertainty of his election; while Arminians hold that all are elected, but it is uncertain who of them will persevere; so Calvinists hold that all who are regenerated will certainly persevere to the end, but they allow of no infallible sign of regeneration — least of all do they call baptism an infallible sign; while those Arminians who hold to baptismal regeneration, as most of them do, temper their certainty of regeneration

children members of the church by virtue of their baptism. The Baptists and we hold the same theory of the visible church, viz., that it is composed of those who give credible evidence of being regenerate, and publicly profess that they believe themselves to be so. Or, in the words of Dr. Dexter, "A true church must be composed of those who believe themselves to be, and publicly profess to be, Christians."¹ Or, still better, in the words of Dr. Punchard, "A visible Christian church is a voluntary association of professed Christians, united together by a covenant for the worship of God and the celebration of religious ordinances."² By "voluntary," he says, he does not mean that persons are not under obligation to join it, but that, in doing this, "it is essential that every person should act freely under the influence of motives, and that no circumstances of birth, no civil law, no ecclesiastical regulations, should be thought sufficient to constitute a church, or entitle a person to church-membership."

We object to calling baptized children members of the church. But it is not because we do not consider them as sustaining any relation to the church. For (if we understand these writers) we agree, in the main, with what Mr. Grout,³

by the view that it is a very easy matter to fall from grace and make it entirely void. Thus the two views may be so stated to trained minds that their practical effect will be the same. And when we say that if the faith and nurture is perfect the conversion of the child would be certain, there is always the uncertainty about the perfection of those exercises on the part of the church.

¹ See "Congregationalism, What it is," etc., pp. 26-29. By Henry M. Dexter (3d ed., Boston, 1871).

² "View of Congregationalism," etc., pp. 37, 38. By George Punchard (2d ed., Andover, 1844).

³ Mr. Grout, in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xxviii. (p. 288 sq.), while advocating the church-membership of baptized children, says that they are not to be admitted to the Lord's supper till their mental and spiritual development is such that they presumably discern the Lord's body, and so do not partake unworthily. Until a credible profession, also, they are to be debarred from the baptism of their children, and from participating in the management of the spiritual affairs of the church, and are freed from the damnatory discipline of the church. What he supposes they are entitled to is, "careful and prayerful instruction, advice, remonstrance, a kind, parental teaching and training in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (p. 299).

Dr. Armstrong,¹ Dr. Bushnell, Dr. Stearns, Dr. Wardlaw, Dr. Dwight, and the authors of the Cambridge Platform, with others,² say about the rights of baptized children. But they have said it in an unusual way, which tends to confusion of thought. They have called baptized children members of the church, indeed, but with so many adjectives before and after that they are compelled to use as many more adjectives to get the real meaning of church-member back into the word when they apply it in the strict sense. They say baptized children are "potential," or "inchoate," or "infant" members, or are members "in some sort," or "in a very qualified sense." In so doing, they have given such a generic meaning to the word "member" that you can make no practical use of it, without an adjective joined to it, defining the species. The word becomes about as definite as the word "vertebrate" would be in defining man. It states one thing; but that one thing is so general that crocodiles and dodos and gorillas are included in it, as well as men. And so, by a similar reduction of the meaning of the word "member," it is made to include everybody for whom the church has any sort of responsibility, even excommunicated members. So when we wish to speak of the real thing of membership, we have to say, "members in full," or in "complete standing," or "actual members," or "adult members."³ If, now, we make

¹ Dr. George D. Armstrong, in "The Doctrine of Baptisms" (New York, 1857), while defending infant church-membership, says: "The visible church being, by God's appointment, his school, the essential right of membership—the only right which is necessarily implied in affirming the church-membership of a person—is the right to instruction 'in all things which God hath commanded'" (p. 247). He adds, further on, that only believing members have a right to partake of the Lord's supper.

² See next Number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, p. 558-571

³ Dr. Pusey (Tract No. 67, p. 22, London, 1836) has some characteristic remarks on the meaning of the term "members of Christ." He says: "When people explain 'members of Christ' to be 'members of Christ's church,' and that to mean 'members of his visible church, or of the society of men called Christians,' a description in itself the highest and most glorious, and the source of every other blessing, is made equivalent to a mere outward admission into a mere outward assembly of men." Dr. Pusey evidently has in view, when he speaks of membership in the church, participation in the benefit of the general

the word "member" synonymous with communicant, all these writers would see what they wanted to say, and say it so that we should all understand it. The confusion and apparent disagreement come in through a lack of discrimination in the use of terms. If we will only agree to use the word "church-membership" in its natural and most generally accepted significance, as descriptive of the position of one who is entitled to all the rights and privileges of church ordinances and fellowship and care, it is very easy to augment or diminish the other relations of which we wish to speak. There are, for example, official members, and male members, who have the responsibility of governing the church. There are members under censure, from whom some of the privileges are withheld for a time. There are excommunicated members, who are not now members at all, but were members once, and have been cut off. Thus it will be seen that the strong language which Dr. Horace Bushnell and others use, in reference to the cruelty of refusing to regard baptized children as church members previous to credible evidence of conversion, and the public profession of it, wholly misses the mark. He fails, in this case, to understand the ordinary usages of our churches. For it is not true that we or the Baptists do, or that we say we do, cast off our children from the solicitous care of the church, when we teach them, as best God gives us grace to do, that they must give signs of regeneration before they present themselves to unite with the visible church. Thus Dr. Bushnell says,¹ that, as all colts are horses, and all lambs are sheep, "so children are all men and women, and if there is any law of futurity in them to justify it, may be fitly classed as believing men and women. . . . The conception, then, of this membership is that it is a potentially real one; that it stands, for

influence of Christianity. He has in view rather the invisible, than the visible church. The visible church is, as we view it, an organization for the preservation and dissemination of Christianity. Christianity is, so to speak, sold by sample. The church is before the world as a witness of the divine power that is granted to her.

¹ Christian Nurture pp. 166, 167 (New York, 1861).

the present, in the faith of the parents and the promise which is to them and their children; and that on this ground they may well enough be accounted believers, just as they are accounted potentially men and women. Then, as they come forward into maturity, it is to be assumed that they will come forward into faith, being grown in the nurture of faith, and will claim for themselves the membership into which they were before inserted." He says ¹ of the exclusion of children from the church till they give evidence of conversion, that in this view Christianity "gives to little children the heritage only of Cain, requiring them to be driven out from the presence of the Lord, and grow up there among the outside crew of aliens and enemies."

Dr. Hodge makes a somewhat similar lamentation: ² "Such attempts [i.e. to limit church-membership to those who are presumptively and visibly regenerate] are not only futile, they are seriously injurious. They contravene the plan of God. They exclude from the watch and care of the church multitudes whom he commands his people to look after and cherish. In confining the visible church to communicants, it unchurches the great majority even of the seed of the faithful." Again: ³ "Do let the little ones have their names written in the Lamb's book of life, even if they afterwards choose to erase them. Being thus enrolled may be the means of their salvation."

Upon this view we have to remark, farther, that great evil is wrought by pressing too closely physical and political analogies in explanation of religious truth. Baptism is not a germ that has an absolute law of futurity in it. Its futurity is contingent, among other things (if not in God's sight, at any rate in ours) on the faithfulness of the church and family in which the child is reared, and on the will of the child itself. A colt will certainly develop into some sort of a horse. But it would not be safe or honest to recommend him and sell him as a reliable horse for family use, till he has given some

¹ Christian Nurture, p. 170.

² Systematic Theology, Vol. iii. p. 577.

³ Ibid. p. 588.

visible signs of having been well trained and of having taken the training kindly. Thus, we believe, it is unsafe and untrue and cruel to the persons themselves to encourage even baptized children in the belief that they are regenerate, before they give some other signs of regeneration than mere negative morality. We may be able to make such calculations in the millennium, when family faith and training are perfect, but certainly we cannot do it now. Unless we hold to baptismal regeneration, or to that ultra Calvinism that ends in Universalism,¹ we cannot say that "little ones have their names written in the Lamb's book of life" by virtue of their baptism. It is also hardly just to assume that the practice of our churches in this matter implies that the children of the church are not under our watch and care, and that we thereby deaden our solicitude for their salvation. It rather has a natural tendency to intensify our solicitude; for it keeps prominent before parents and children, church and world, the certain and universal reign of sin, except where grace abounds, and it leads us to seek for that grace, and watch for its manifestations with a solicitude that is impossible where communities are under the sedative influences of a ritualistic or fatalistic view of the effects of baptism.

It is best for us just here briefly to state the grounds upon which we urge that the church should require something more than a mere profession of faith as a condition of membership. This is all the more necessary since Dr. Hodge in the third volume of his *Systematic Theology* has recently made so vigorous an attempt to demolish what he calls the theory and practice of the "Independents or Con-

¹ A writer in the *Biblical Repertory* (1861, p. 688) says: "It [infant baptism] is to us a formal and public consecration of our children to God, an expression of our faith in his covenant promise, and an emblematic representation of their need of purification and of the nature of the Spirit's work. . . . We ought to say, . . . These children belong to God. The seal of his covenant has been applied to them. . . . Such is our confidence in him, that, while we cannot and could not presume to limit him as to time, place, or manner of their conversion, yet we firmly believe in the reality of his covenant, and that, after using them for his glory here, he will bring them into his heavenly kingdom at last."

gregationalists.”¹ The principles which he attributes to them, and combats, are thus stated by him: ² first, “That the church consists of the regenerate.” This, we remark, is a very ambiguous statement. Does he mean by church “visible church,” or “invisible”? Does he mean by regenerate actually regenerate or apparently regenerate? If he means that the visible church should consist only of those who give reasonable evidence to men of being regenerate, he has said just what we hold, and what he himself would not be prepared to deny. The second principle imputed to us is, “that a particular church consists of a number of true believers united together by mutual covenant.” The only addition we would make to this would be the insertion of “presumably” before “true believers.” We by no means hold, as Dr. Hodge seems to imply in many places, that we can reach absolute perfection in sifting out the true from the false. The third principle imputed to us is, “that no one should be admitted to church-membership who did not give credible evidence of being a true child of God,” and that “they understood by credible evidence, not such as may be believed, but such as constrains belief.” Here we remark the word “constrains” is ambiguous as to its degree. These principles, he says, “were brought to this country by the disciples of Robinson, and controlled the New England churches for many years. They were gradually relaxed when the theory above stated [that of the Half-Way Covenant], gained the ascendancy, which it retained until President Edwards published his ‘Essay,’ which gradually changed the opinions and practice of the Congregational churches throughout the land, and to a great extent those of the Presbyterians also.” To this theory he objects,³ (1) That it is a novelty, (2) It has no warrant in scripture either of precept or example. . . . That “it is impossible that they [the apostles] should have examined and decided favorably as to the regeneration of each of the five thousand persons added to the church in one day in Jerusalem.” But we reply, (a) that the age of the Reformation

¹ Vol. iii. p. 545.

² Ibid. p. 569

³ Ibid. p. 571.

was an age of novelties ; (b) that the right to look for signs of regeneration before admission to the church, is of precisely the same nature with that of bringing forward signs of the absence of regeneration regarding those whom the church excommunicates. Power of excommunication nobody denies the church. In answer, Dr. Hodge says :¹ " There is an obvious inconsistency in having one rule for admission into the church and another for continued membership. If Christ requires us to reject all whom, in the judgment of charity, we are not constrained to believe to be regenerate, then he requires us to excommunicate all those of whom this belief is not entertained. But no church acts, or can act, on that principle." The simple solution of that difficulty is, we respond, that it is easier for an individual to prove a positive thing pertaining to his character than it is for a miscellaneous body to prove a universal negative regarding him. To withhold fellowship from one till the church has opportunity to see convincing, visible signs that he is really one of them, is a far milder judgment than to attempt to prove afterwards that he is a hypocrite. And as to the examination of the five thousand in one day at Jerusalem, it is sufficient to say, that it does not require as protracted an examination to ascertain the genuineness of one's profession when he makes it in the face of old-time prejudices and violent opposition, and at the risk of his life, as it does when such a profession is a passport to social, commercial, and political promotion.

(3) Dr. Hodge objects,² that " the attempt to make the visible church consist exclusively of true believers, must not only inevitably fail of success, but it must also be productive of evil." He quotes from Cotton Mather³ these words : " The Lord hath not set up churches only that a few old Christians may keep one another warm while they live, and then carry away the church into the cold grave with them when they die ; no, but that they might nurse up still successively another generation of subjects to our Lord, that may stand up in his kingdom when they are gone ? "

¹ Vol. iii. p. 577.

² *Ibid.* p. 572.

³ *Magnalia*, Vol. ii. p. 309.

(4) "Experience proves that it is a great evil to make the church consist only of communicants, and to cast out into the world, without any of that watch and care which God intended for them, all those together with their children, who do not see their way clear to come to the Lord's table."¹ To this we say that nobody supposes we are going to succeed perfectly in keeping unregenerate persons out of the church, or in getting all regenerate persons into the church. But we hope to approximate nearer to that ideal standard in the first direction than any of the state churches have ever done, and in this hope Dr. Hodge doubtless shares, and in this attempt to secure greater purity he would also share, for while he objects to requiring "credible evidence" of regeneration in candidates for church fellowship, he insists on their making a credible profession, i.e., a profession that is not contradicted by their walk and conversation.² But the question is, what in these times of the Spirit's enlightenment is a "credible profession?" Credible evidence is required to make a profession credible. Shall we by our standard of admission to the church encourage men to believe that the mere absence of outward immoralities is evidence enough that one's profession is of a faith that will save him? What we hold is, that a man does not make a "credible profession" of Christian faith till he can hope, and in some degree express the hope, that he has, among other things, that love of God's people and of God's word and of prayer, that are very easily seen to be the characteristics of a regenerate state. Dr. Hodge's plan is a sure way to make the visible church invisible, by abolishing the tests that ordinarily reveal the character of the person. It is best, we believe, for all parties, that the communicant make such a profession that he shall be judged by a higher standard than that of mere negative morality.

Dr. Joseph Tracy,³ speaking of the habit of hoping, under such a system as Dr. Hodge proposes, that each communi-

¹ Systematic Theology, Vol. iii. p. 572.

² Ibid. p. 575.

³ The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield (6th ed., Boston Congregational Board), p. 3.

cant is a regenerate person, well says : " In order to render such hopes possible, it must be held that the difference between the regenerate and others is not apparent to men ; that regeneration, ordinarily at least, produces no apparent change, of which the teachers and rulers of the church may expect to find evidence by examination ; and that therefore they must regard every one as regenerate, unless some scandalous offence gives evidence to the contrary. Ministers thus situated may preach on the necessity of regeneration, and on the evidence of it which every one ought to find in himself, and may express their fear that some of their people are not yet converted, and urge them to self-examination ; but while they are obliged in the most solemn offices of religion to treat every one as a real convert, the force of such preaching is at least greatly diminished. Unconverted communicants will hope that they have passed through that imperceptible change, will come to the Lord's table, and even make their way into the ministry. The preaching can scarce fail, in the end, to come into harmony with the practice.

" The New England Puritans believed that when a man is ' born again ' a change is wrought in him, of which it is possible for him and others to find evidence ; that the regenerate differ from the unregenerate by the possession of some substantial good qualities, which must show themselves in thought, feeling, and conduct ; and they felt bound to treat all as unregenerate in whom, on examination, no evidence of Christian piety could be found. They therefore admitted none to their communion except such as might, in ' charitable discretion,' be considered regenerate persons."

Dr. Hodge has fallen into the same mistake in regard to President Edwards's positions, that was made by Mr. Williams, as will be seen from the following quotation from the " Reply to Williams " :¹ " Mr. Williams does very greatly misrepresent the opinion I am of, and the principles I maintain in my book in many respects. He says, ' The whole argument, and indeed the whole controversy, turns upon this

¹ Edward's Works, Vol. i. p. 349 sq.

single point, viz., what is that evidence, which, by divine appointment, the church is to have of the saintship of those who are admitted to the outward privileges of the covenant of grace? Mr. Edwards seems to suppose this must be the highest evidence a man can give of sincerity; and I apprehend it to be the lowest evidence the nature of the thing will admit.' But this is very strange, since I had particularly declared in my *stating* of the question, that the evidence I insisted on was, *some outward manifestation that ordinarily rendered the thing probable*. Which shows that all I insisted on was only that the evidence should amount to *probability*. And if the nature of the case will admit of some *lower* kind of evidence than this, or if there be any such thing as a sort of evidence that does not so much as amount to *probability*, then it is possible that I may have some controversy with him and others about the degree of evidence; otherwise it is hard to conceive how he should contrive to make out a controversy with me."

It would seem almost as though President Edwards was reviewing Dr. Hodge himself in the following quotation:¹ "Mr. Williams is abundant in suggesting and insinuating to his readers that the opinion laid down in my book is, that persons ought not to be admitted to communion without an absolute and peremptory determination in those who admit them, that they are truly godly; because I suppose it to be necessary that there should be a positive judgment in their favor.

"Here I desire the reader to observe that the word 'positive' is used in two senses. (1) Sometimes it is put in opposition to *doubtful* or *uncertain*; and then it signifies the same as *certain, peremptory, or assured*. But (2) the word 'positive' is very often used in a very different sense—not in opposition to *doubtful*, but in opposition to *negative*. And so understood, it signifies very much the same as *real* or *actual*. The reader will easily see that the word 'positive,' taken in this sense, is an exceeding different thing from

¹ Works, Vol. i. p. 352.

certain or *peremptory*. . . . Now, it is in this sense I use the phrase *positive judgment*, viz. in opposition to a mere *negative charity*; as I very plainly express the matter, and particularly and fully explain myself in stating the question. In my Inquiry I have the following words: 'By *Christian judgment* I intend something further than a kind of mere *negative charity*, implying that we forbear to censure and condemn a man because we do not know but that he may be godly, and therefore forbear to proceed on the foot of such a censure or judgment in our treatment of him; as we would kindly entertain a stranger, not knowing but in so doing we entertain an angel or precious saint of God. But I mean a *positive judgment*, founded on some *positive* appearance or visibility, some outward manifestation that ordinarily renders the thing *probable*. There is a difference between suspending our judgment, or forbearing to condemn, or having some hope that possibly the thing may be so, and so hoping the best, and a *positive* judgment in favor of a person. For a having some hope only implies that a man is not in utter despair of a thing; though his prevailing opinion may be otherwise, or he may suspend his opinion.'

The preface to the Cambridge Platform answers this objection in reference to the charge of "taking no course for the gaining and healing and calling in of ignorant and erroneous persons whom we refuse to receive into our churches, and so exclude them from the remedy of church discipline." And their reasoning applies as well to baptized persons who do not give visible signs of regeneration as to unbaptized persons in a similar condition. "We conceive," it says, "the receiving of them into our churches would rather lose and corrupt our churches than gain and heal them. A little leaven laid in a lump of dough will sooner leaven the whole lump than the whole lump will sweeten it. We find it, therefore, safer to square rough and unhewn stones before they be laid into the building, rather than to hammer and hew them when they lie unevenly in the building. And, accordingly, two means we use to gain and call in such as

are ignorant and scandalous: (1) The public ministry of the word. . . . (2) Private conference and conviction by the elders and other able brethren of the church, whom they do the more respectfully hearken unto when they see no hope of enjoying church fellowship, or participation in the sacraments for themselves or their children, till they approve their judgments to be sound and orthodox and their lives reduced to some hope of a godly conversation."

That use of baptism and the Lord's supper which Dr. Hodge calls a means of salvation¹ might as appropriately be called the means for preventing self-examination and for confusing the moral judgments of men; for it has a peculiar resemblance to the high ritualistic doctrine of the Roman Catholic church, that there is a power in the sacraments themselves, aside from what they express. On the other hand, we use the Lord's supper as a means of salvation to those who do not partake of it, as well as to those who do, by endeavoring to make it a badge of actual regeneration. As we use it, the world is invited to regard us and to see if we have the actual fruits of a regenerate heart. And when such is the standard of criticism for the church, due self-examination is more likely to take place before one indulges in a hope that he is in a condition of salvation.² We make the church a means of salvation, as well by keeping unworthy persons out as by getting the worthy ones in. Those who would make of the church, as John Robinson would say, "a mangle-mangle" of good and bad are in the way of destroying it as any means of grace at all. Our hope lies not in extreme views in either direction. We cannot hope, as the world is,

¹ Vol. iii. p. 576. "It is, moreover, not only a duty, but a right, a privilege, and a blessing to receive the sacraments of the church. They are divinely appointed means of grace. We must have good reasons, if we venture to refuse any of our fellow-sinners the use of the means of salvation which Christ has appointed. It is to be feared that many have come short of eternal life, who, had they been received into the bosom of the church, and enjoyed its guardian and fostering care, might have been saved."

² For a delineation of the evils that resulted in New England from the low standard of admission to church-membership that prevailed just before Edwards's time, see Dr. Tracy, in "Great Awakening," p. 7 sq.

to secure a visible church that is perfectly pure; but we can hope to approximate to that state. We may not hope, perhaps, to secure more than eleven true apostles to one Judas. But when it comes to pass that a majority of the body are Judases, it will be hard to make any true members afterwards. If we compare the standard of admission to the church to a sieve, the extremes would be, sieves so fine that only a few of the minutest particles could get through at all, and sieves so coarse that everything but the loosest trash will go through. Neither of these extremes can work well. There have been tendencies to the first extreme in some quarters of the Puritan camp. Tendencies to the other extreme have been very manifest in some communions. The main tendency of Congregational churches has been in a direction to avoid the rocks on either side. John Robinson protested against practices of communion that all the evangelical churches in this country now discard. And neither he nor his successors have ever been to any great extent inclined to excessive, undue rigor in their terms of admission to the church.

We do not claim perfection for the religious life of New England, as influenced by Robinson and his coadjutors. It has exhibited extravagances in some directions. It has not been free from some vagaries of practice and doctrine that are to be lamented. Its revivals have been, perhaps, too spasmodic. Its course onward has not been in a line that is mathematically straight. It has not developed character that has been altogether symmetrical. Symmetry of the individual is hardly to be expected when the sinful tendencies of society are so disproportionate. Here we are often made one-sided by our efforts to resist the special obstacles that oppose us. Here we are begrimed by the very dust we raise in our efforts to do good work. It is not for those ages or those sections whose hands have never been made callous by the work of great undertakings to criticise too sharply. But on the whole, the religious life of New England has flowed onward towards the golden future of pro-

phetic hope with steady course ; adding, at each stage in its progress, a powerful, and in many respects unparalleled, impulse to the forces that are subduing all things to Christ. The valley is long and wide and deep and straight, if the stream that made it does wind from side to side in its course. We see no reason yet why we should abandon the principle defended by Edwards, that none "ought to be admitted to the communion and privileges of members of the visible church of Christ, in complete standing, but such as are, in profession and in the eye of the church's Christian judgment, godly or gracious persons." ¹

V. SCRIPTURE WARRANT FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

When, now, we come to consider the scriptural warrant for the practice of infant baptism, we must warn the reader that the design of this Article will only admit of the barest outline of our argument. And we beg leave to carry into the inquiry concerning the Bible warrant the weight of the general considerations concerning baptism already established. For it should always be borne in mind that it is a most important rule of interpretation that language should be interpreted according to the known nature of the subject. All our interpretations of the Bible regarding geological, astronomical, and other kindred subjects are modified by this rule. So, likewise, the Bible language concerning free-will and divine agency is to be interpreted in harmony with what is otherwise known concerning these subjects. It will thus be seen that the force we may give to particular passages of scripture which bear upon the question in hand will depend somewhat upon our agreement regarding this preliminary discussion. We think we have shown that infant baptism naturally expresses, except in one unimportant particular, all that adult baptism does, and a good deal more. What adult baptism expresses concerning the need of regeneration, infant baptism expresses still more impressively. The hope which the divine promises give that the proper use of means will result, through divine

¹ Works, as above, Vol. i. p. 153.

grace, in regeneration is expressed in infant baptism, and not in adult baptism. This we conceive to be more important than the additional idea present in adult baptism, viz., that the subject probably has been regenerated. For this last idea we can keep prominently enough before the world through our forms of admission to the church, and of invitation to the Lord's supper, and through meetings for prayer and religious conference.

With these things clearly in mind, we shall see, perhaps, that there is less force than some suppose in the argument against infant baptism which is founded on the fact that, in apostolic exhortation, faith and repentance are mentioned before baptism. For the facts that these are confessedly first in importance, and that the address is to adults, and can be to no others, naturally account for the form of the exhortation.

Also, the train of thought pursued above, sends us with some degree of momentum, along the line of argument which proceeds on the presumption that the covenant that was symbolized in circumcision would not be left wholly without symbol in the new dispensation. There are some lines of procedure discernible in the progress of the revelation of the Bible that are capable of being established by induction about as conclusively as the uniformity of the laws of nature.

God's plan to work, in general, through the family institution is one of those revealed facts that runs through the history, the precepts, and promises of scripture with remarkable persistency and clearness. This plan stands so clearly revealed in the Old Testament, and has been so frequently dwelt upon that there is no need of anything more than a reference to it here. Two passages of scripture will in combination present our line of argument: "And if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree" (Rom. xi. 17). This sets us to asking what is the root and fatness of the olive-tree which we may partake of with the Jews. These are, first, the offers of salvation through Christ, which were symbolized

in the sacrifices of the old dispensation, and which are symbolized now in the Lord's supper. Secondly, the covenant of God to co-operate with us to secure the salvation of our children and other individuals in proportion to our efforts in their behalf. This was symbolized in the old dispensation by circumcision, and may be symbolized to us in infant baptism. The old promise was: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in thy generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." The symbol of this part of the root and fatness of the olive-tree Pedo-baptists object to giving up, unless good proof is given that there is a positive command to do so. They cannot accept the commands made to unbaptized and unregenerate adults to believe and be baptized as proof that the baptism of the infant children of believers is robbed of its natural significance and forbidden them.

We cannot but believe that with all the attachment of the Jews to the Abrahamic covenant and to its symbol, the Jewish Christians would have applied the rite of baptism to their children, unless they had been positively forbidden to do it. And if they had been discouraged from doing it, there would have been in the New Testament history traces of rebellion and opposition on that point, as there were about giving up circumcision.

But space forbids us to do more here, than give a passing glance at this part of our subject; and with the single specimen given above of our line of argument we must pass on. The nature of the case precludes absolute demonstration; but the line of the foregoing considerations makes it difficult for one not to acquiesce in the calm and weighty words of Dr. Emmons: "Candor, in this case, will teach every person to be satisfied with that kind of evidence which the nature of this subject affords, and with the degree of evidence which results from the united influence of these moral arguments.¹ If there be no direct evidence against infant baptism, and some positive evidence in favor of it, then

¹ Works, edited by Dr. Ide (Boston, 1860), Vol. iii. p. 666.

every impartial person must, at least, lean towards the doctrine, though he meet with some seeming difficulties." ¹

CONCLUSION.

(1) Infant baptism naturally signifies that all men are sinners in need of regeneration. Adult baptism can signify no more upon this point, and indicates this less emphatically than infant baptism. (2) Adult baptism may signify that the person baptized has been regenerated. This fact, we have shown, may be indicated with sufficient clearness by Pedo-baptists in their terms of admission to the Lord's supper. (3) Infant baptism may naturally incorporate into its significance the hopes and conditions of the covenant that was symbolized in circumcision, which covenant is held to be of vital importance by all the churches. It is fulfilling the natural ends of the rite to have this additional idea in the symbol, and it need not weaken the other idea that is naturally expressed in baptism. Both the references are to the Spirit's work. We cannot resist the belief that it is of great importance to the church to preserve this idea in the symbol, together with those precautions against its perversion which evangelical Pedo-baptists in America have generally taken. If it be true, as to some extent it undoubtedly is, that the baptism of infants is greatly neglected, it arises, we believe, from that general neglect, so prevalent now-a-days, of serious and faithful study of the doctrines on which the church reposes her hope. When we come again to a juster appreciation of the worth and connections of the revealed doctrines of grace, the rite of infant baptism will doubtless have again its precious significance, and be restored again to its proper use and prevalence.

And, too, the times are becoming tainted with pernicious views concerning the true dignity and importance of the mother's place in society. There has been a loud clamor raised for some wider sphere of operations than is furnished for the pious mother in her family of small children. As though

¹ Works, edited by Dr. Ide (Boston, 1850), Vol. iii. p. 650.

there could be any other sphere more important than that occupied by the Christian mother, who sits at the fountain head, and casts the salt of divine grace into the very source from which the whole stream flows. The attempt to belittle in the minds of men the work of the mother in forming the sentiment of the family life is a thrust at the foundations upon which all other human agencies for rearing the structure of Christianity rest. Infant baptism naturally embodies in its meaning that whole circle of ideas that have ennobled the condition and duties of woman in Christian lands. It is a triumphal arch, forcing upon the attention of the world the all-important, though unseen, victories that woman wins in the sphere of her home duties. The unobtrusiveness of the position calls for such a divine monument. To many of us, who wish to retain the true idea of the inherent dignity of the position which the mother occupies amid the Christianizing and civilizing agencies of the world, infant baptism and its cluster of symbolical doctrines are allies with which we are loth to part.

Still another reason for the neglect of infant baptism is to be found in the extreme to which we are everywhere pushing, both in family and state, our ideas of individualism. We have come to be morbidly sensitive to the fear of imposing a condition upon children which they have not freely chosen. Because we have admitted that baptized children are not constituted by virtue of their baptism members of the church, in the ordinary sense of that expression, there has been danger of our going to the extreme of supposing that they sustained no particular relation to the church, and that the church had no special responsibility for them. But they should be regarded as the foster-children of the church. They should be made to feel that the church prays, labors, and hopes for their early conversion. They should be made to feel that it is no small calamity for them to separate themselves by their conduct from the sympathy of the church. It would be well if baptized children were brought up to feel it worth their while to conduct themselves so that when from any cause

they change their residence they could obtain from the church a certificate of baptism and of correct outward demeanor.

The practice of infant baptism, when its significance is more fully apprehended, will awaken in the church a sense of responsibility for baptized children akin to that which parents have for their own children. There is no Christian grace the want of which is more imperative upon the church at the present time than this. In this age of individualism and of the breaking up of family traditions and conservative institutions, the tendencies are all centrifugal. They have already resulted in a dangerous weakening of our sense of responsibility for the Christian nurture of children. The neglect of infant baptism is a sign of this weakened sense of responsibility, and at the same time it is a cause reacting to aggravate the evil. In this age of active inquiry the more general practice of the rite would lead to a more general consideration and appreciation of its rational significance and of the fundamental importance of the ideas which it symbolizes. We are no longer in much danger from that mysticism which transformed infant baptism into a magical rite. The Baptists have done their part to break the spell of those ideas. If, now, they must retain the practice of immersion, why may they not add to it the vitally important ideas expressed by infant baptism.

(To be continued.)